

Radio broadcasting situation in Vietnam : state of multimedia radio programming - expected changes and problems foreseen

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**RADIO BROADCASTING SITUATION IN VIETNAM
STATE OF MULTIMEDIA RADIO PROGRAMMING
EXPECTED CHANGES AND PROBLEMS FORESEEN**

BY

VU HOAI MY

**RADIO THE VOICE OF VIETNAM
VOV International**

**RADIO BROADCASTING SITUATION IN VIETNAM, STATE OF
MULTIMEDIA RADIO PROGRAMMING**

Established on September 7, 1945 as a National Radio, over the past more than half a century Radio the Voice of Vietnam has continuously strengthened, renovated and developed. VOV and Vietnam Broadcasting Industry are among the few media in Vietnam that provide the public with the most instant and comprehensive coverage of national and international events. VOV is a sharp instrument for disseminating Party and State's guidelines and policies. At the same time, it is a forum for ideas exchange between the government and the public. VOV has the responsibility to meet the demands of the audience in information, education and entertainment.

Being a Government-owned organization, VOV also manages local broadcasting and transmitting activities from the state level. It is responsible to work out Radio broadcasting development strategy in terms of human resource and technologies.

In 1998 the total airtime of VOV is 113 hours 45 minutes/ day with 215 various programs in Vietnamese and foreign languages, produced by more than 400 reporters, editors and translators.

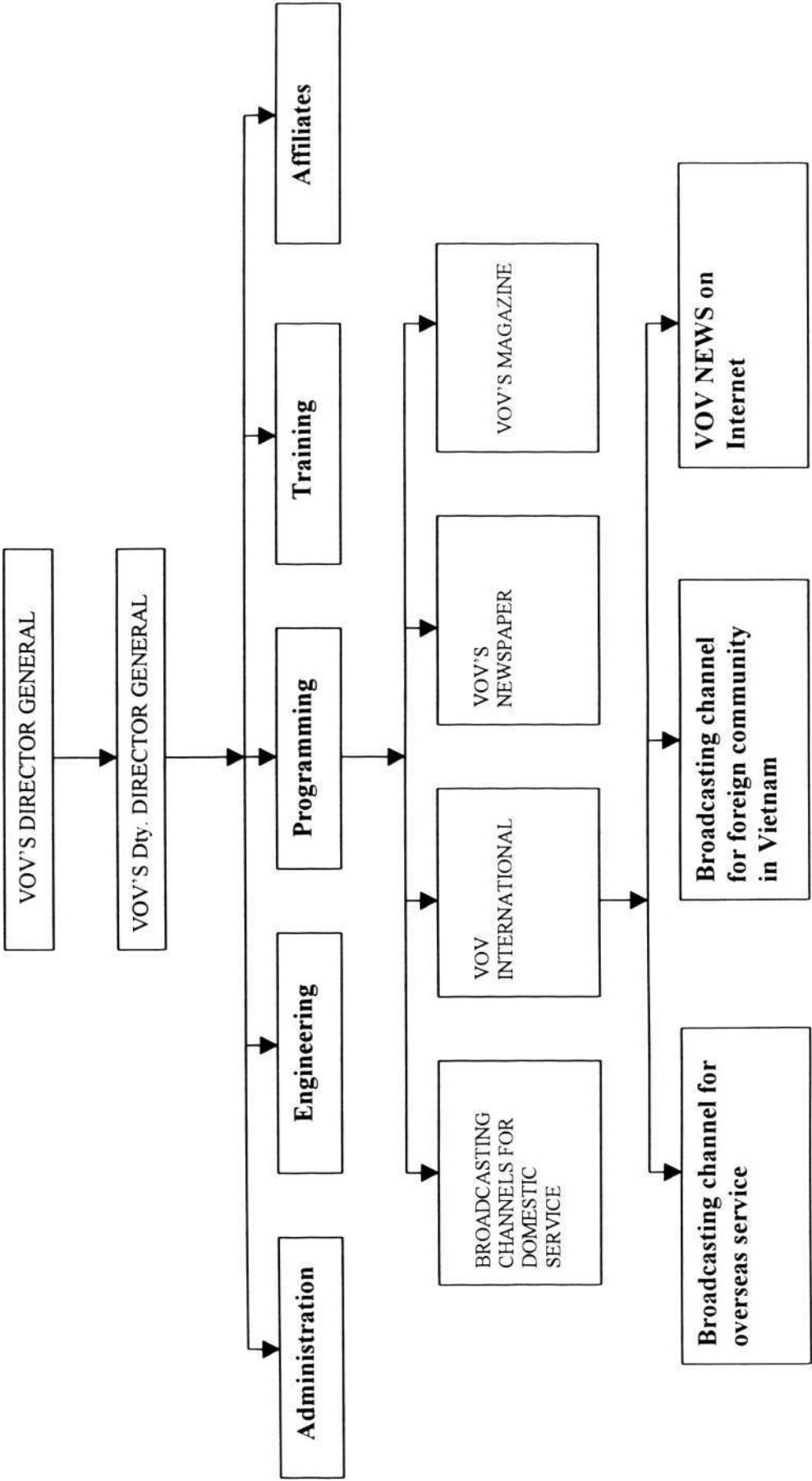
Among more than 500 newspapers, magazines and the television, VOV is the only medium in Vietnam that dominates the day time with updated information. VOV programs are broadcast for wide-ranging audiences in Vietnam and overseas including the foreign community in Vietnam. Besides VOV has a monthly magazine, a weekly newspaper and a daily on-line service.

VOV always tries to improve the quality of its programs, considering it as a key factor. Events are reported in sequence, in depth and with solutions for the listeners to have a truthful picture of what has been happening. This makes VOV's programs more worth listening.

In several programs, reporters and editors talk directly to the listeners. Live broadcasting of great political, cultural and sport events, "Radio Bridge", various clubs for music and theatre lovers, talks, seminars and studio guests... make VOV programs more and more lively and closer to listeners.

VOV'S ORGANIZATION CHART

May 1999



VOV AND MULTIMEDIA:

VOV now broadcasts in the following channels:

+VOV-1 (AM): News, current affairs, economic and music programs. The one-hour live broadcasting news and music program at 12.00 hour is one of the most favoured radio programs of VOV. Thirty-minute news bulletin at 6.00 O'clock and forty five-minute news and current affairs at 18.00 hours are also broadcast live.

+VOV-2 (AM): Cultural, social, educational, literature, arts, music programs.

+VOV-3 (FM) : News and music. Besides there are also foreign language and Vietnamese lessons on this popular channel.

+VOV-4: This channel is in service of ethnic minority people. VOV broadcast in 6 ethnic minority languages and plans to broadcast in 10 ethnic minority languages by the year 2000. Meanwhile 20 provincial radio stations broadcast in 20 ethnic minority languages.

+VOV-5 (FM): Live broadcasting programs in English and French for foreign community in Vietnam. VOV 5 plans to broadcast in Cantonese later this year.

+VOV-6 (AM & SW) : VOV International broadcasts in 11 foreign languages: English, French, Russian, Spanish, Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Indonesian, Thai, Lao, Khmer and in Vietnamese for overseas Vietnamese. This year VOV International will broadcast live its English

and French programs on its AM service. Established at the same time with Radio The Voice of Vietnam, VOV International now has listeners in more than 70 countries all over the world.

+ As of February 3, 1999 VOV's Electronic Newspaper "VOV NEWS" began its Vietnamese and English programs on the Internet. In the first stage it is in the form of text. An estimated 6,000 Internet users enter "VOV NEWS" daily. VOV NEWS plans to have its Internet service in the form of sound later this year. VOV NEWS also plans to establish a VOV's music library of traditional Vietnamese music.

VOV International is now operating VOV-5, VOV-6 and VOV NEWS.

+ VOV also has a weekly newspaper "Radio The Voice of Vietnam" printing articles and news items selected from programs broadcast during the week as well as features, documentaries and reportages written by its reporters and stringers.

Nowadays VOV reaches its audience inside and outside of the country not only by radio waves, but also by printing newspaper and the Internet. These 3 media which operate simultaneously, supplement each other. Obviously radio broadcasting plays the key and decisive role in meeting the public needs of information.

TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGIES:

Radio program production:

VOV has timely applied informatics technologies to its professional activities. Nowadays VOV's Audio Center has 24 studios including 2 music studios equipped with analogue and DAT facilities and 3 one-man-studios. Digital technology is being introduced in replacement of obsolete analogue equipment. Newsroom and workstations have been gradually computerized. The FM music program editing, producing and storing are carried out on the computer network equipped with the modern X-Track system.

One of the music studios is using a state-of-the-art mixer with digital music recording.

VOV has put into operation The News and Information Center equipped with computer system using Basys system and D-Cart Sound Editing system for collecting, processing and storing news in form of text and sound. Some sections are using sound editing systems such as Fast-edit and Cool-edit.

VOV has now 4 modern Outside Broadcast (OB) vans.

Transmitting and broadcasting:

VOV's programs are transmitted through microwaves, cable and satellites. Moreover, VOV has applied modern technology – digital

compression and decompression technology, which has greatly improved the quality of transmission.

VOV's programs are broadcast on FM, AM and SW.

VOV is now carrying out a plan according to that by the year 2000, 95% of the population nationwide can listen to VOV.

LOCAL RADIO BROADCASTING:

Vietnam now has 61 city and provincial radio stations, 528 district stations including 319 FM stations. These provincial stations are responsible for re-broadcasting national news bulletins, and producing their own programs including local news and features. 11 provincial stations have been doing live broadcast in framework of the SIDA Project on "Support to Local Radio Broadcasting". 4 more provincial radios will be added to the list this year.

EXPECTED CHANGES AND PROBLEMS FORESEEN

VOV has set an objective of one radio set for every Vietnamese household by the year 2000 so that 95% of the population can listen to VOV. But there remain many difficulties:

- Vietnam's complex terrain, which includes remote, mountainous areas and islands, makes it hard for radio reception. Expanding

the radio coverage and transmitting system is an ambitious and costly plan.

- Nearly 80% of the population live in rural areas; many can not afford to buy radio. So VOV has to carry out a plan of producing cheap and easy to use radio to sell or distribute to the poor people.
- There's a growing competition from other media, especially television and the Internet.
- Technology at VOV is a mixture of obsolete analogue with state-of-the-art digital technology. Especially in local radio stations almost studio equipment, as well as transmitters are obsolete. It will be a long and hard process and very costly to fully renovate broadcasting technology at VOV and for Vietnam Broadcasting Industry.
- Upgrading radio broadcasting is the process of comprehensive renovation both in term of equipment and staff of reporters, editors, technicians and managers. Over two-thirds of VOV staff are on their forties which is a disadvantage in adapting to new technology, especially digital equipment and computerized network. This requires great investment in training and retraining. On-the-spot training and advanced broadcasting training courses overseas will be a solution to improve VOV staff's professionalism.

- Vietnam is integrating fast into the region and the world. This creates many opportunities for Vietnam's Broadcasting to catch up with regional and global standards. On the one hand, Vietnam has to preserve its culture and traditions, while absorbing all universal values.

CONCLUSION:

The growing trend of globalization and concentration of media ownership in the era of information provide both opportunities and challenges for the media of every nation. Today when fiber optics system, satellites and Internet have wiped out the boundaries between countries and regions, mass media of each country is exposed to fierce competition from outside. Besides, VOV has to affirm its stronghold among the mass media in Vietnam. To this end, VOV has to make full use of its assorted means: audio service, on-line service and newspaper. Upgrading equipment and improving staff's professionalism, expanding external relations will also help the national broadcasters progress in the multimedia age.